

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Thursday, November 10, 2011

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Action Item Calendar

Monday (November 14): At-home instructed, June graduating, noncertified staff reports due
Tuesday (November 15): Deadline for final selections of district teachers of the year

November 21: AP survey for fee waivers due
December 1: Districts verify all personnel assignments
December 1: For TCS, Districts should clarify model to determine “contributing educators”
December 9: Textbook reimbursement forms due
June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit final personnel assignments

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Rhode Island to participate in Green Ribbon Schools program

As you may be aware, the U.S. Department of Education has recently announced a new initiative: Green Ribbon Schools. Modeled after Blue Ribbon Schools Program, the Green Ribbon Schools award will recognize exemplary achievement in environmental impact, health, and environmental education. The U.S. Department of Education is looking to identify schools that have the least impact on the environment, the most positive impact on the health of students and staff, and the most effective preparation of students for careers and citizenship in the 21st century.

As Education Secretary Arne Duncan has said:

Green schools are critical to schools’ fiscal health and our nation’s economy. ... Environmental education and green facilities schools are as vital to individual students as they are to their schools and the nation. High standards of nutrition, fitness, and facility conditions improve student and staff health, attendance, and productivity, and enhance achievement and engagement. ... Green schools support our shared objectives of well-rounded education, healthy students, and STEM achievement.

I am pleased to let you know that Rhode Island will participate in the Green Ribbon Schools program, and we are in the process of developing procedures for nominations for Green Ribbon Schools award, which I will share with you as soon as possible. I believe that we will have many Rhode Island schools competing for this important new recognition, this year and for years to come.

2. Advisory opinion issued on personnel assignments and collective bargaining

I want to give you a heads-up that I have issued a formal legal advisory opinion, at the request of the Lincoln School Committee, regarding whether hiring, terminations, recall, assignment, and transfer of certified school personnel can be the subject of collective bargaining. The advisory opinion concludes that “staffing decisions relating to providers of instructional services are vested in the non-delegable managerial responsibilities of the school district.” Citing state laws, case precedent, and the Regents’ Basic Education Program (BEP) regulations, my 2009 letter to the field on seniority, the advisory opinion finds that “there exists no rational link between seniority per se and educational achievement” and that the BEP requires districts to develop

and institute “policies and procedures for a human capital system supportive of the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.”

The upshot is:

- LEAs cannot base assignments (of instructional staff) solely on seniority;
- LEAs must develop human capital systems that support continuous improvement of teaching and learning;
- local school-committee policies and procedures, which the school committees will develop independently of the collective-bargaining process, must support these systems of human capital management; and
- despite this legal requirement that districts develop human capital management systems through school-committee policy, there may still be working conditions and terms of professional employment that will continue to be subject to collective bargaining.

It’s also important to note that the BEP went into effect on July 1, 2010, and therefore it affects collective-bargaining agreements as they expire past that date.

I have met with the leadership of RISSA and of the Rhode Island Association of School Committees to brief them on this advisory, and we have agreed to set up meetings at which our Legal Office team and I can discuss these issues with you directly. The advisory is posted here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/news/advisories/Formal%20Legal%20Advisory%20Opinion%20-%20Lincoln%20School%20Committee.pdf>

3. Two-hour delays permitted during inclement weather

Because of the severe weather conditions last winter that on many days made it difficult to open school on time, I am renewing my decision from last year to allow a delay of up to two hours for the start of a school day during inclement weather. I am renewing this decision because the two-hour delay can enable you to operate your schools more efficiently during inclement weather and because the two-hour delay is preferable to losing a full day of school.

As you did last year, you must meet several conditions in order to delay the opening of school by two hours during inclement weather:

- within five days of a delayed school opening, you must notify my office of any announced delay of the start of school exceeding one hour;
- regardless of the length of the delay up to the maximum allowable two hours, your schools must fulfill the requirement of providing a minimum three hours of instructional time;
- you are expected to develop a plan for ensuring that the minimum required three-hour school day consists of meaningful instructional time.

This variance will be in effect until April 15, 2012; after then, your obligations relating to the start of the school day will be governed by Board of Regents Regulation G-4-8.

Also, I must remind you that without assurances that your schools are delivering at least three hours of instructional time on those days when you have delayed school opening by two hours because of inclement weather, you cannot credit these days as “school days” toward fulfilling the required 180-day school year.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter, and I hope school openings proceed smoothly and without incident this winter.

4. Rhode Island honored for schools policies on asthma management and prevention

I am pleased to let you know that the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America has chosen Rhode Island as one of the six Honor Roll states for its 2011 State Honor Roll™. The 2011 State Honor Roll celebrates states that exhibit exemplary statewide school policies that promote asthma and allergy management and prevention for students. Rhode Island has been an Honor Roll state since 2008.

To view the full report from the foundation, see:

www.statehonorroll.com.

From RIDE:

5. High schools asked to submit information for AP fee waivers – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

Under the U.S. Department of Education Advanced Placement Test Fee Waiver Program, the RIDE receives federal funding to provide College Board Advanced Placement tests to low-income students free of charge. The purpose of the Advanced Placement Test Fee Reimbursement Program is to remove the financial barriers that prevent many economically disadvantaged students from taking the College Board Advanced Placement (AP).

All AP test coordinators in Rhode Island public schools are asked to complete a survey identifying the number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch who will take AP exams. This survey is required so that RIDE can gather the information necessary for the application for the Advanced Placement Test Fee Waiver Program. It is important that every high school complete a survey so that we have an accurate count of students when applying for funds.

Please provide AP test coordinators with the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/APTestWaiver>

The survey is to be completed by November 21.

A student qualifies for the test fee if he or she qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Act. A student does not need to participate in the free or reduced-price lunch program; he or she simply needs to qualify. Please note that the participating school is responsible for low-income student eligibility documentation and that the records for this program are subject to audit. The AP test coordinator must determine each student's eligibility and retain a verifiable list of students who qualify for fee reductions and the number of examinations taken by each student. Documentation of student-eligibility records and verification that no fees are collected are subject to audit and should be kept for five years.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Golenia, at 222-8406 or jennifer.golenia@ride.ri.gov.

6. RIDE seeks proposals for development of a recovery high school

Please see this notice from our Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports:

RIDE invites all districts, public schools, and approved special education programs to submit plans to create a pilot recovery high school. A recovery high school serves students diagnosed with substance-use disorder or dependency, as defined by the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders IV-TR, and provides both comprehensive four- (4) year high-school education and a structured plan of recovery. For more information, please view this link on our Web site:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OSCAS/Documents/RIDE%20Recovery%20High%20School.pdf%20-%20Adobe%20Acrobat%20Pro.pdf>

7. New certification regulations posted; RIDE to post FAQs on regulations

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The Board of Regents' approval of new certification regulations is an important step to ensure that we have excellent teachers and leaders in our schools and that certification supports educators toward continuous improvement. The certification regulations will also have significant impact on how educators attain and renew their certifications. We want to make sure we share communication with all educators regarding how educators will renew their certifications, how an educator can add a new certification, how the regulations will impact current and future educators, and how we will set the timeline for the implementation of these regulations, as some elements of the regulations will go into effect on January 1, 2012, and some elements not until January 1, 2015. The approved regulations can be accessed here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/CertificationRedesign/Default.aspx>

An FAQ to accompany the certification regulations will be available next week. Please watch for additional information in future field memos as well as updates on the certification-redesign Web page. Please direct any questions to Andre Audette (andre.audette@ride.ri.gov, or 222-5103).

8. Module 3 sessions for teacher evaluators in progress; make-up sessions for building-administrator evaluators scheduled

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Module 3 for personnel evaluating teachers is under way and will run through December 8. The training is focused on conducting classroom observations, delivering feedback, analyzing non-observable evidence, and preparing for mid-year conferences. The sessions are filling up fast, so please register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

Make-up trainings sessions for both Module 1 and Module 2 for building-administrator evaluators have been scheduled for **Wednesday** (November 16), at the West Bay Collaborative, 144 Bignall St., Warwick 02888. Module 1 will take place from 8:30 -11:30 a.m., and Module 2 will take place from 12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Building-administrator evaluators can register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

9. RIDE offers call-in and drop-in sessions on Rhode Island Model for educator evaluations

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

In order to provide educators with additional opportunities to receive answers to their questions about the Rhode Island Model for educator evaluations, RIDE has scheduled multiple call-in and drop-in sessions. Interested participants will need to register for the call-in sessions to obtain the conference-call number, but participants do not need to register for the drop-in sessions. Additional information about the call-in and drop-in sessions can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/EdEvalAnnounce.aspx>

10. RIDE posts additional Student Learning Objective samples

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Additional Student Learning Objective examples are constantly being added to the RIDE Web site, and the most recent additions included music, visual arts, and special

education. We are always looking for great sample Student Learning Objectives to share, especially for specialist subjects and special education. If you have sample Student Learning Objectives that you would be willing to share, please send them to EdEval@ride.ri.gov.

11. ADP Algebra I and Algebra II end-of-course exams no longer offered

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The American Diploma Project (ADP) Assessment Consortium, which developed the Algebra I and Algebra II end-of-course exams, will discontinue, as many states have chosen not to offer the exams in the coming years. Therefore, RIDE will not be offering the opportunity for LEAs to participate in the assessment in this future. Please keep in mind that, although the consortium has ended, it has informed the work of the common assessments in mathematics by identifying instructional challenges in teaching rigorous levels of mathematics, informing the process of setting performance levels and standard-setting for college readiness, and noting positive practices for states in working together. Our thanks are expressed to those districts who participated in the ADP Algebra I and Algebra II end-of-course exams. If you have any questions about this program, please contact Patricia Carnevale, at 222-8474.

From other state agencies:

12. Report available on prevention of youth suicide

Please see this notice from the Department of Health:

The Rhode Island Child Death Review Team (CDRT), operating under the auspices of the Office of the State Medical Examiners in the Department of Health, reviews incidences of youth fatality in Rhode Island, which includes youth deaths by suicide. From 2005 through 2010, the CDRT reviewed the deaths of 73 young people (ages 0-24) who died in Rhode Island by suicide. The [Rhode Island Youth Suicide Issue Brief](#) is meant to serve as a centralized resource to better inform prevention efforts statewide. This issue brief provides data on youth suicide-fatality rates statewide, methods used, attempt rates, minority-youth considerations, suicide risk factors, protective factors, current education and prevention efforts, resources, and team-generated recommendations.

For questions as to the content of the briefing, please contact Jennifer Kawatu, Coordinator of CDRT, at 824-2119.

Other:

13. PARCC releases Model Content Frameworks that will inform new assessments

We are proud that Rhode Island is serving on the Governing Board for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a 24-state consortium that is developing the next-generation assessments in English and mathematics. Rhode Island will begin using the PARCC assessments in 2014. PARCC issued this news release on Wednesday,

about the Model Content Frameworks that will inform the development of items for these new assessments:

PARCC Releases Model Content Frameworks

Frameworks provide an outline for common assessments in English, mathematics

The state-led Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) today released Model Content Frameworks that will be used to inform the development of item specifications and blueprints for K-12 assessments in English and math. The frameworks also provide support and guidance for implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

“The frameworks are an important part of developing high-quality assessments that are linked to the expectation of college and career readiness found in the Common Core State Standards,” said Laura Slover, senior vice president at Achieve, which is the project management partner for the PARCC consortium.

The frameworks were created through a collaborative process that included state experts and writers of the Common Core State Standards. Nearly 1,000 individual comments were submitted from K-12 educators, principals, superintendents, higher-education faculty, school-board members, parents and students. The writing teams took that feedback into account when revising the model content frameworks.

Tamara Reavis, chair of the 14-state PARCC working group on implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Director of Assessment and Accountability for the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education, said the frameworks will support states and districts in their own curriculum development efforts.

“The frameworks build a bridge between the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessment system that will be a valuable tool for states as they implement the standards in the coming years,” said Reavis.

The Model Content Frameworks are intended to be dynamic and responsive to evidence and on-going input. As such, PARCC hopes they will be used by educators for the remainder of the 2011-12 school year. In the spring of 2012, PARCC will again solicit feedback on the Model Content Frameworks, and a refined version will be issued that incorporates feedback as needed. In this way, the Model Content Frameworks can evolve to reflect the experiences of educators and students. For more information or to view the frameworks, please visit:

www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>

